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# Blue Demons Abroad

Every year, the study abroad program sends students, faculty and staff all over the world to learn firsthand about other cultures.

By Jacob Sabolo (LAS '12)

Graham Kilpatrick (LAS '17) at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland.

**T**he study abroad program at DePaul University always has been about embracing differences. Students, faculty and staff embark on journeys in foreign countries, study or teach at different universities, encounter new cultures and have experiences they never would have received in Chicago. Understanding those differences is perhaps more relevant than ever.

"If we want our students to be world-ready, then we need to teach them how to interact with the world, effectively,

sensitively and with purpose," says Martha McGivern, director of the study abroad program at DePaul. "Students come back with the context of the world in mind. They're able to interact with people who are different from them in school, work and community settings. They understand that the rest of the world affects us, and they understand that their actions affect the world as well."

DePaul sends more than 1,000 students abroad to more than 35 countries every

year. While some students participate in traditional programs—a semesterlong or yearlong program at another university—nearly 70 percent of students study abroad with faculty and staff members. Students study with a professor for a quarter and then travel abroad during the winter, spring or summer break.

DePaul also offers First Year Abroad (FY@broad), a short-term program that combines first-year coursework with a travel abroad opportunity. According to McGivern,

encouraging students to study abroad their freshman year makes it easier for them to plan ahead academically and financially for additional study abroad trips.

"These experiences change students' lives," says McGivern. "Students come back and say, 'I interact with my family and friends differently. I changed my major. I added a minor. I have new ideas on what I want to do professionally.' They realize how they fit into the rest of the world."



# Interning With the EU Parliament

When Eliza Talaga started her freshman year at DePaul, she knew right away that she wanted to study abroad. A daughter of Polish immigrants, Talaga has traveled through most of Europe, but when she discovered an opportunity to spend spring break in Asia, she knew she had to go.

Talaga, now a junior majoring in international studies, enrolled in Associate Professor of Political Science Phillip Stalley's FY@broad class on China's environmental challenges. During the 2016 spring break, the class explored Beijing, where they toured the city and visited Hanergy's Renewable Energy Exhibition Center, the Great Wall and the Beijing Olympic Village.

After Talaga came back from Beijing, she immediately signed up to study abroad for a longer duration. She spent the 2017 winter quarter in Leuven, Belgium, interning for European Union (EU) Parliament member and Hungarian politician Benedek Jávor. "It worked out in my favor because for the internship, they looked at what I learned about the environment in China. Jávor is the vice-chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, so it was a good transition to do something more," she says.

Aside from day-to-day duties like answering phones and responding to email, Talaga attended several committee and primary meetings with Jávor. It was during those meetings that Talaga was able to observe European politics in action. She was present during the meeting where Iratxe García Pérez, a Spanish member of Parliament, stood



Eliza Talaga stands outside of the Espace Léopold in Brussels, Belgium, where the EU holds most of its meetings.

up for women and equal pay. "I went to her office after the meeting and thanked her," says Talaga.

When she was not working, Talaga was taking five classes at the Catholic University of Leuven with three other DePaul students and four students from Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Talaga and the group spent most of their free time traveling to different European

countries, including France, Portugal and Sweden.

Talaga strongly advocates for study abroad programs. "[The U.S.] is very diverse, but I feel like people stick to what they're familiar with and what they know," she says. "If you're put into a country where people's customs, language and traditions are different, you're forced to be a part of that. You mold yourself into that culture."





Olivia Skummer (second from right) practices with her University of Sheffield teammates.

## Rowing in England

From an early age, Olivia Skummer was fascinated with other countries. When it came time to decide on a college to attend, she considered going to school abroad but ultimately picked DePaul. “I absolutely love DePaul—what it stands for and its city vibe,” she says. Although Skummer ended up in Chicago, her love for foreign countries has not wavered.

As soon as she began her freshman year, Skummer started researching different study abroad programs at DePaul. “I thought Australia sounded cool, but I wanted the ability to explore Europe,” she says. She picked the Sheffield, England, program because of its yearlong duration and because she did not know anyone else who had done or was doing it. “The whole point of me

leaving the country was to get away from American students and to see something new. ... I liked the idea of having a fresh start, knowing nothing and nobody, and just building from there,” she says.

Skummer, now a junior studying public relations and advertising, spent her sophomore year at the University of Sheffield. She recalls that the first week was very similar to her first week at DePaul. “The week was just for international students, so I was meeting people from everywhere that you could possibly think of,” she says. Although she admits that it was overwhelming at times, she adjusted quickly to Sheffield as she made new friends. Skummer also joined the rowing team—she rows for DePaul as well—and bonded with her teammates.

Skummer discovered that the university was not that different from DePaul. “I would call the University of Sheffield the DePaul of the United Kingdom. DePaul is accepting of everyone. Sheffield has a huge LGBTQ society. They respect all religions and different cultures. There’s an inclusive attitude and everybody is welcome. We were all there to learn and to become better and grow,” she says.

According to Skummer, her time abroad gave her a sense of independence. “I had to put a lot of responsibility on myself. I feel like it’s made me grow up a lot,” she says. Skummer hopes to return to England for her master’s degree. “I definitely would like to have an international education and career.”



# Mischief in Volubilis

Since the early 2000s, Shailja Sharma, associate professor of international studies, has taught several courses with study abroad components. “It really opens [students’] minds up to the way in which we are part of a very complex society,” she says. “You can’t learn from just reading about it. You have to experience the diversity and the different viewpoints that exist in the world.”

She led her first group of students to Delhi, India, in 2004. Students spent two weeks visiting historical sites and one week interning with nongovernmental organizations. More recently, Sharma

took students to Morocco to study immigration.

While students spend the fall quarter leading up to the trip focused on coursework, Sharma also ensures they are ready to travel with each other. “The interactive activities allow me more insight into them that I wouldn’t normally have in a conventional class,” she says. Learning about her students’ interests and hobbies helps Sharma plan specific activities that enrich their experiences abroad. In Fez, Morocco, one student studying education was able to observe a few classes at a small school. Another student went to a

henna party to interact with women whom she otherwise would not have encountered.

In Morocco, Sharma and her students attended lectures and language classes at academic institutions and toured different sites. She remembers visiting Volubilis, an ancient Roman archaeological site, where her students became fascinated with a baby monkey. “The students had not dealt with a live monkey before. The monkey stole the glasses of one of our students,” she laughs. “I offered the monkey a chocolate bar if he would hand back the glasses. The student got his glasses back, and the monkey ate the chocolate bar.”

Associate Professor Shailja Sharma’s students pose for a group photo in Morocco.







Associate Professor Melissa Markley (far left) and her students brave the cold in hopes of spotting some whales.

## Searching for Whales in Iceland

Melissa Markley, associate professor in the Driehaus College of Business, keeps busy. Not only is she chair of the Chicago Quarter Committee, as well as chair of the college's International Business Committee, she also leads three study abroad classes per academic year. "My favorite classes I teach are Discover Chicago and study abroad, because I think they really touch students. They impact their thinking and their views of the world," she says.

After co-leading a group of students in Germany in 2011 with **Stephen Koernig (MBA '94)**, chair of the Department of Marketing, Markley created two study abroad courses: one in Switzerland that launched in 2012 and another in Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden, known as the Scandinavia trip.

Markley got the idea for the Switzerland course after one of

her close friends quit his job at a luxury eyewear company to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector. A couple of years after he moved to Switzerland, he started working for UNICEF. He called Markley one day and said, "You need to teach a course about how business is done in a nonprofit because it's very different from a for-profit company." Markley established connections with nonprofits in Switzerland to allow students to learn more about the industry.

During the trip, students visit nonprofits two to three times a day. They also visit the Alps and travel to Zurich for chocolate-making classes. One of Markley's favorite memories was a final night in Switzerland. "We went to this beer hall that had live music. All the songs were in German. The students had no idea what was going on, but they were dancing with people in the

aisles. They weren't Americans anymore. They were travelers," she recalls.

Markley also leads students on the Scandinavia trip. "I thought, why don't we run a program on the business of sustainable energy?" she says. Markley and students meet with companies in the sustainable energy field and businesses who excel at utilizing sustainable practices, including the organizational body that oversees all of the environmental sustainability activities in Denmark and engineers who design wind and trash programs. They also visit the Crowne Plaza Hotel, which is the most sustainable hotel in the world.

Markley remembers whale watching with students in Iceland. "It was about 1 a.m., and it was freezing cold in June. The students were on a boat, wearing these huge, bright-red, thermal onesies, looking for whales," she says.

Despite her busy schedule and the amount of work that goes into planning her study abroad courses, Markley is thankful for the opportunities. "I feel like I'm changing lives with study abroad," she says. "I'm changing students' worldview, changing what they're going to do with their careers and how they're going to view the rest of their education."

# Teaching in Mexico

**Ani Kasparian (LAS '16)** loves languages. Her passion for them led her to DePaul. "I wanted to be in a place where I could practice different languages, and in a city like Chicago, I had so many opportunities to do so," she says. "I decided to go to DePaul because I wanted to major in Arabic, and there are not many schools that offer it as a major." Kasparian graduated with degrees in Arabic and Spanish and a minor in French. She is currently teaching English in Jordan as part of the Fulbright Program.

During her junior year at DePaul, Kasparian studied in Mérida, Mexico. "When you are working with languages, one of the most important things is to experience the culture of the people who speak that language," she says. She lived with a host family

while taking Spanish and service-learning courses at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán and Universidad Marista. As part of her service-learning course, Kasparian participated in community outreach, such as teaching languages and computer skills to children. "We were learning Mayan, speaking Spanish and teaching English. To me, Mayan represents their past. Spanish represents their present. If they were to go abroad, English could represent their future. I thought it was cool that we could use those three languages to help them discover their roots, appreciate who they are and give them tools for their futures," she recalls.

Her living arrangement also helped Kasparian understand Méridian culture. Her host mom taught her about the area and local cuisine. In her spare time, Kasparian would explore

the central area of Mérida, spend time at cafes and see movies at the local cinema. Kasparian also enjoyed visiting Chiapas, a state in Mexico. "We were in a valley in the hills with mountains all around us. It was as if we were in another world. We were not allowed to take pictures because the people there believe that once you take a picture, your soul is found in the photo," she recalls.

Kasparian's fondest memories during her three-month stay are of the people with whom she interacted, from the children she taught to the locals she interviewed for her research project. "It was just so profound to see how, essentially, we are all human. We all love to talk, laugh and have fun. When you have the opportunity to meet people coming from a variety of socioeconomic classes, it is then when you can say you have truly experienced the diversity of a country. It was a beautiful experience to connect with such a truly diverse group of Méridians," she says. Kasparian returned to Mérida the following year to visit the friends she met during her time abroad.

"If you are going to make a difference in the world, it is important that you have lived abroad and have felt the pain that other citizens have felt," she says. "The more experiences you have in that way, the more empathetic and better equipped you will be to serve those people. With that empathy you can do so much good."

**Ani Kasparian (LAS '16)** and her students in Mérida, Mexico.

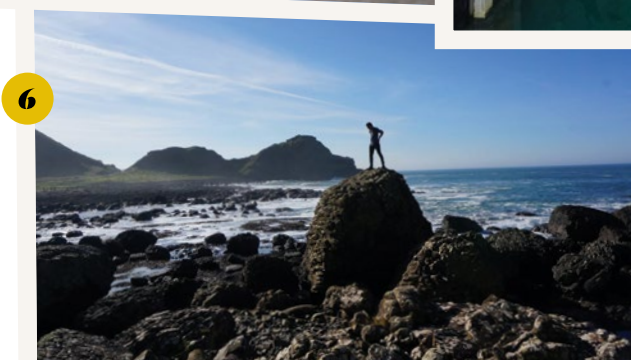
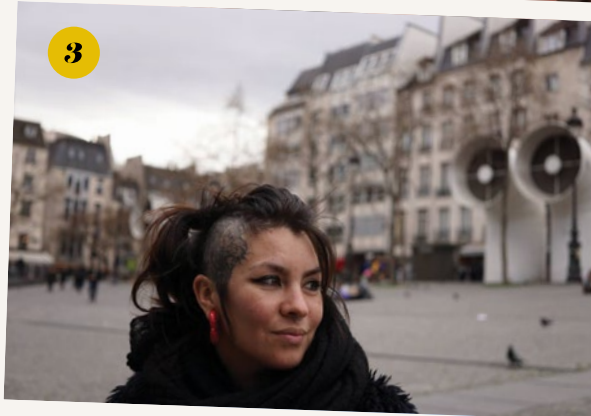


Visit [depaulmagazine.com](http://depaulmagazine.com) to watch study abroad videos made by students and to read one student's advice to those venturing abroad.



# 2017 Photo Contest

Every year, the study abroad program asks students to share their photos from their travels. Take a look at some of the 2017 winning submissions.



**1** "Future Farmers or Policemen or Politicians or Helicopter Pilots," Maharashtra, India, submitted by **Bradley Herman (CDM '12, LAS MS '17)** **2** "Tranquility Abroad," Panama City, Panama, submitted by Kaliah Liggins **3** "Ignacia," Paris, France, submitted by Hannah Haake **4** "Escape to Venice," Venice, Italy, submitted by Nicole Odziewa **5** "Embracing the Space," Innsbruck, Austria, submitted by **Lamise Bayyari (BUS '17)** **6** "Small Opportunities for New Heights," Ulster, Northern Ireland, submitted by **Marc Castillo (LAS '17)**